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Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Fourth Session
New York, 7-9 September 2011

Report of the fourth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with article 40 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (General Assembly resolution 61/106), the fourth session of the Conference of States Parties was held in New York from 7 to 9 September 2011. The theme of the session was "Enabling development: realizing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through participation, employment and international cooperation".[1]

2. The Conference included four formal meetings. During the 1st meeting, on 7 September, the President and other officers of the Conference were elected. Two round tables, entitled "Realizing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through international cooperation" and "Ensuring effective and full participation in political and public life", were held during the 2nd meeting, on 7 September, and the 3rd meeting, on 8 September, respectively. There was also an informal meeting in the afternoon of 8 September entitled "Realizing the right to work and employment". On 9 September, there was an interactive dialogue on the implementation of the Convention.

II. Opening of the meeting and high-level segment

3. The 1st meeting was called to order on the morning of 7 September by the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, who opened the meeting on behalf of the Secretary-General.

[1] More than 600 participants, representing approximately 70 Governments, 110 non-governmental organizations and United Nations entities including four regional commissions, attended the session, and more than 40 side events were held concurrently.

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4. A proposal to clarify the rules of procedure concerning the geographic rotation of the presidency of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the Conference.[2]

5. Under agenda item 2, the Conference proceeded with the election of the officers of the Conference: Sweden was elected President of the Conference and Hungary, Jamaica, Sierra Leone and Thailand were elected Vice-Presidents.

6. The Conference adopted the provisional agenda submitted by the Secretary-General (CRPD/CSP/2011/1).

7. Pursuant to rule 25, paragraph 5 (c), of the rules of procedure and on the basis of a non-objection procedure, 10 non-governmental organizations were accredited to the Conference (see annex I).

8. At the opening meeting, statements were made by Mårten Grunditz, President of the Conference; the Deputy Secretary-General; the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; and the Assistant Secretary-General, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

9. The Conference then proceeded to consider agenda item 5, entitled "Matters related to the implementation of the Convention: (a) high-level segment and (b) general debate".

10. Statements were made by 34 States parties,[3] including 12 at the ministerial level; 4 signatories;[4] and 4 observers,[5] including representatives of national human rights institutions, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations. These statements informed the Conference of progress made in the implementation of the Convention, in particular on the realization of the Convention through participation in political and public life, employment and international cooperation.

III. Round-table discussions

11. On the afternoon of 7 September and the morning of 8 September, the Conference held the second set of meetings, which included presentations by a panel

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[2] The Conference, at its 1st meeting, of the fourth session, adopted a decision concerning the geographical rotation of the presidency of the Conference as a footnote to rule 9 of its rules of procedure for the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (see CRPD/CSP/2008/3). Rule 9 provides that the Conference shall elect a Bureau consisting of a President and four Vice-Presidents from among the representatives of the States parties to serve for a term of two years. The text of the footnote is as follows: "The Conference of States Parties shall, at its 2011 meeting, elect a President from among the Western European and other States, to be followed by the African States, the Asia-Pacific States, the Eastern European States and the Latin American and the Caribbean States, with subsequent elections for this office following the same geographical rotation."

[3] Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Egypt, Germany, Honduras, Hungary, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Lithuania, Maldives, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Peru, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay and the European Union.

[4] Israel, Japan, Norway and United States of America.

[5] Human Rights Watch, International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions, International Disability Alliance and Inter-Parliamentary Union.

of speakers from round tables 1 and 2 followed by interactive discussions. Subsequent to the presentations, the Chairs of the round tables opened the floor to questions and discussion. The President's summaries of round tables 1 and 2 are available in annex II.

Round table 1: Realizing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through international cooperation

12. Round table 1, entitled "Realizing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through international cooperation", was chaired by Jakkrit Srivali (Thailand). Presentations were made by six panellists: Shuaib Chalklen (Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development), Maria Verónica Reina (Global Partnership for Disability and Development), Yasunobu Ishii (Nippon Foundation), Diane Mulligan (Equality 2025), Vanda Guiomar Pignato (First Lady of El Salvador/Organization of American States Committee) and Josephine Sinyo (Kenya Law Reform Commission). The panellists discussed issues concerning article 32 of the Convention, highlighting the importance of mainstreaming disability in all aspects of international development cooperation. The President's summary of round table 1 is available in annex II.

Round table 2: Ensuring effective and full participation in political and public life

13. Round table 2, entitled "Ensuring effective and full participation in political and public life", was chaired by Shekou M. Touray (Sierra Leone). Presentations were made by six panellists: Osman Keh Kamara (Sierra Leone) spoke on behalf of Julius Nye Cuffie (Member of Parliament, Sierra Leone), Steven Estey (Disabled Peoples' International, Canada), Monthian Buntan (Senator, Thailand), Andrew Bruce (Department of Political Affairs), Theresia Degener (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and Maria Alejandra Villanueva (Peruvian Down Syndrome Society). The panellists discussed key issues, identified barriers and made strategic recommendations to realize the rights of persons with disabilities through promoting accessibility and ensuring equal participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in political and public life. The President's summary of round table 2 is available in annex II.

IV. Informal meeting on realizing the right to work and employment

14. On the afternoon of 8 September, an informal meeting was co-chaired by Gergely Tapolczai (Member of Parliament, Hungary) and Yannis Vardakastanis (President, European Disability Forum, representing International Disability Alliance). Presentations were made by seven panellists: Barbara Murray (International Labour Organization), Javed Abidi (National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, India), Jia Yang, Ronald McCallum and Stig Langvad (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), Annie Garcia (SM Supermalls, Philippines) and Ronnie Goldberg (United States Council for International Business). Speakers discussed ways to foster an inclusive labour market with a focus on the role of the employers.

V. Interactive dialogue on the implementation of the Convention

15. The 4th meeting of the Conference, chaired by the President, was held on the morning of 9 September and considered agenda item 5 (e), "Interactive dialogue on the implementation of the Convention". Presentations were made by 10 speakers, some of whom participated via teleconference, representing the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Group, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and OHCHR. Panellists offered concrete examples of how these United Nations entities had advanced disability rights and supported the implementation of the Convention.

16. The Chair provided an update of the work of the Committee from its fifth session. He stated that although the Committee had conducted a successful dialogue with Tunisia and would be conducting a dialogue with Spain, there had been a new challenge involving the late submission of reports, which had reduced the opportunities for dialogue between the treaty body and the States parties. The Chair encouraged the States parties to support the work of the Committee by submitting their reports in either French or English. He stated that the Committee would request additional meetings and resources from the General Assembly to fulfil its tasks.

17. After a short round of questions and answers, summaries of the two round tables and the informal meeting were presented.

18. Diane Richler (International Disability Alliance), Co-Chair of the informal meeting, reported on the outcome of the civil society forum preceding the Conference. The civil society forum had started to reflect on the preparation of a possible high-level meeting on disability and development to be held during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. The forum stressed the following: persons with disabilities needed to be included in all phases of development projects; capacity-building of disabled people's organizations was essential to secure inclusive development; and recipient countries had a responsibility to include disability in their funding priorities, while donors were to ensure that inclusive development was a requirement for funding. Finally, the civil society forum suggested that the disability perspective be included in two upcoming United Nations conferences, including at the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, Republic of Korea, and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

19. Aslam Mohamed Shakir (Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Maldives) addressed the Conference, offering an account of national efforts to implement the Convention.

VI. Closing of the Conference

20. In closing, the President stressed that universal ratification of the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto was within reach and that it was indeed a

necessity, given that more than a billion people in the world live with disabilities. There could be no progress on internationally agreed development goals without integrating a disability perspective into all development efforts.[6] International cooperation could and must be a catalytic force to make those efforts inclusive. The Conference had shown that the participation of persons with disabilities, both in the labour market and in public and political life, were equally essential features of inclusive development. The Convention would continue to be pivotal in the quest to ensure the enabling of development and the enjoyment of human rights by all.

VII. Other matters

21. The Conference had before it a compilation of good practices for including persons with disabilities in all aspects of development efforts (CRPD/CSP/2011/CRP.1); a discussion paper for round table 1 on international cooperation (CRPD/CSP/2011/CRP.2); a discussion paper for round table 2 on participation in political and civil life (CRPD/CSP/2011/CRP.3); a discussion paper for the informal meeting on work and employment (CRPD/CSP/2011/CRP.4); and a compilation of legislative measures undertaken in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (see www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1571).

22. Statements made at the opening, round tables and other meetings of the fourth session of the Conference of States Parties as well as other related information can also be accessed at www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1571.

23. Under agenda item 6, Other matters, the Conference agreed to confirm the exact dates of the fifth session of the Conference in 2012, taking into account the United Nations calendar of key events and meetings and the availability of conference services.

[6] The President cited the reports of the Secretary-General, including "Status of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto" (A/66/121), "Realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities" (A/66/128) and a thematic study by OHCHR on the role of international cooperation in support of the Convention (A/HRC/16/38).

Annex I

Non-governmental organizations accredited to the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during its fourth session

In accordance with rule 25, paragraph 5 (c), of the rules of procedure of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and following a no-objection procedure, the following non-governmental organizations were accredited:

1. Asabe Shehu Yar'Adua Foundation
2. Association 3IN — Inclusion, Integrity and Independence
3. Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation
4. Design Bangladesh
5. Equally Unique
6. The Harvard Law School Project on Disability
7. Lift Up Care for the Needy Foundation
8. Neighbour Organization Nepal
9. Perkins School for the Blind
10. World Disability Foundation

Annex II

President's summary of the fourth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Round table 1: Realizing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through international cooperation

1. Round table 1 was chaired by Jakkrit Srivali (Thailand). The Chair drew attention to the fact that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was the only human rights treaty to include a specific article on international cooperation. He noted that this was a reflection of the critical role of international cooperation in realizing the rights of persons with disabilities.

2. The panel discussed key issues concerning article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, reaffirming and highlighting the important role of international development cooperation in promoting disability-inclusive development and advancing the rights of persons with disabilities.

3. Shuaib Chalklen (Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development) discussed the financial relationship between donors and recipient countries in the field of disability. He noted that often only disability-specific programmes, rather than those aimed at mainstreaming disability into general development programmes, received funding support. Australia and the United States Agency for International Development were introduced as good examples of donor countries and agencies that have successfully supported the mainstreaming of disability into development programmes. He also noted the need for greater emphasis on research and disability-related statistics — a point which was subsequently reiterated by other panellists and participants.

4. Maria Verónica Reina (Global Partnership for Disability and Development) highlighted the importance of ensuring disability-inclusive international cooperation, stating that in order to do so effectively, an interconnected set of actors was needed. She argued that both donor and recipient countries should coordinate their actions and explore innovative approaches to collaboration. She noted that new aid architecture was emerging at the global level, which allowed developing countries to set their own development priorities using donor funding. She emphasized that the specific needs of persons with disabilities should be included in order to promote disability-inclusive development programmes.

5. In his presentation, Yasunobu Ishii (Nippon Foundation) focused on the role of human resource development for persons with disabilities. The Nippon Foundation has funded some projects on disability in South-East Asia, focusing on information accessibility, human resource development and international networking. Mr. Ishii stressed that the active involvement of persons with disabilities in all phases and aspects of planning, programming and decision-making was vital to the success of any disability-related project. He also stated that the provision of opportunities for young persons with disabilities, including access to higher education and to the experience of working at the international level, was crucial to creating a stronger workforce of persons with disabilities in the future. He stated that the shortage of well-trained, experienced persons with disabilities continued to remain a major challenge around the world.

6. The panellists received comments and questions from representatives of Australia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Egypt, Honduras, Italy, Jordan, Mali, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa and the United States of America, as well as representatives of civil society organizations. Key points included the critical role of education and human resources development for persons with disabilities, the possibility of establishing monitoring systems, the importance of mobilizing resources for both disability-specific programmes and in support of mainstreaming disability into general development programmes, the need for increased coordination between donor and recipient countries, the possibility of utilizing other treaty bodies and the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council, the need for ensuring that the concept of intellectual property would include and benefit persons with disabilities, the importance of enhancing statistical capacity on disability and the need to enhance international cooperation, including for the least developed countries.

7. Diane Mulligan (Equality 2025) stated that article 32 of the Convention should be interpreted as broadly as possible at all levels of governance and among Governments, non-governmental organizations and academics. She emphasized the following core components for ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention: persons with disabilities should have a clear role in new programmes and initiatives, all efforts should incorporate a rights-based approach and an understanding of different levels of development, stakeholders should provide clear and firm commitments to accessibility and equality of persons with disabilities, better data-collection methods should be developed and the eight Millennium Development Goals that are interconnected with disability should be fully implemented.

8. Vanda Guiomar Pignato (First Lady of El Salvador/Organization of American States Committee) focused her presentation on the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities created by the Organization of American States after its adoption of the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities. She stated that the Committee had become a global benchmark for disability rights and that it had called on its States parties to review progress and the need for improvement. She asserted that international cooperation should be established between the two treaty bodies of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, since both Conventions addressed the same agenda. She suggested that a coordinated reporting mechanism be established to serve the committees of both the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

9. Josephine Sinyo (Kenya Law Reform Commission) noted that Kenyan Sign Language had been recognized as an official language in Kenya. She discussed relevant aspects of the Constitution of Kenya, in particular those concerning the inclusion and promotion of persons with disabilities. She addressed the importance of promoting fundamental human rights by building relationships among Governments, disabled people's organizations, civil society and other stakeholders.

10. Questions were posed by representatives from the Philippines and the Sudan regarding the mainstreaming of disability through enhancing partnerships among organizations in the private and public sectors and between the United Nations and the Organization of American States. The representative from the Sudan asked

specifically about a support unit of the United Nations on implementation of the Convention. Ms. Pignato, Ms. Sinyo and Ms. Mulligan responded by sharing the lengthy yet worthwhile efforts towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Ms. Mulligan expressed her interest in a support unit and discussed the potential progress it could generate for all States parties.

11. The Chair summarized round table 1, highlighting the importance of higher education for persons with disabilities, programmes to mainstream disability in development, roles of persons with disabilities within development projects, disability-inclusive human resource policies, links between human rights and disability rights, the role of a high-level meeting on disability and development and the need to include all stakeholders in planning and implementing a disability-inclusive development agenda.

Round table 2: Ensuring effective and full participation in political and public life

12. Round table 2 was chaired by Shekou M. Touray (Sierra Leone). The panel discussed key issues, identified progress and barriers and made strategic recommendations to realize disability-inclusive and accessible political processes, including elections.

13. Steven Estey (Disabled People's International, Canada) gave a comprehensive overview of the efforts of Disabled People's International to promote article 29 of the Convention in Canada. He recommended that accessibility toolkits be prepared for political parties, and that the laws regulating political parties be reviewed and revised to ensure the inclusiveness of persons with disabilities.

14. Monthian Buntan (Senator, Thailand) observed that legislation in Thailand had become increasingly inclusive of persons with disabilities, although lack of physical accessibility remained a major barrier. He stated that progress had been made in Thailand to hold Government agencies accountable for ensuring accessible voting opportunities for persons with disabilities.

15. Andrew Bruce (Department of Political Affairs) explained that full and effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in electoral processes required accessible registration and information. He called for greater attention to advocacy reform and inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of electoral processes. He also stated that the international community should encourage and support the inclusion of persons with disabilities as observers during elections.

16. Theresia Degener (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) emphasized that in order to effectively implement article 29 of the Convention, persons with disabilities should have equal access to full civil rights, including opportunities to obtain employment within Governments and civil society organizations. She identified barriers to persons with disabilities participating in the electoral process as one of the most grievous violations of human rights. She raised the concern that persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities had been legally deprived of access to the electoral process in many countries.

17. Maria Alejandra Villanueva (Peruvian Down Syndrome Society) recounted her experience of continually being left out of the political process in her country due to her disability. She stated that she had been able to exercise her right to vote only in

recent years, albeit with the words "mental disability" attached to her document. She envisioned the day when all persons with disabilities would exercise their right to vote; she stated that the full implementation of the Convention by each country could realize this dream.

18. Osman Keh Kamara (Sierra Leone), reading the presentation of Julius Nye Cuffie (Member of Parliament, Sierra Leone), introduced the Persons with Disabilities Act, which had been enacted in Sierra Leone in May 2011 in an effort to implement the Convention. He observed that political candidates with disabilities had been successful at the polls and that the voting rights of persons with disabilities are increasingly being realized. He noted that the disability community in Sierra Leone had voted for candidates who would support their rights and inclusion. He emphasized the importance of politicians and activists working towards mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political processes.

Summary of the informal meeting

19. An informal meeting was co-chaired by Gergely Tapolczai (Member of Parliament, Hungary) and Yannis Vardakastanis (President, European Disability Forum, representing International Disability Alliance) on the subject of "Realizing the right to work and employment".

20. Barbara Murray (International Labour Organization (ILO)) discussed the need for comprehensive reforms to ensure accessible labour markets. She argued that efforts to promote employment for persons with disabilities should be multidimensional, gender-sensitive and inclusive of both formal and informal markets and other stakeholders.

21. Jia Yang (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) emphasized the employment of persons with disabilities as one of the most pressing issues facing the Committee, one which would help shift the perspective of disability from a medical to a social model. Stressing the role of international cooperation, she referred to progress made in China, which, since 2007, had accelerated employment of persons with disabilities through policy reforms, increased employment service systems and assistance by public institutions.

22. Stig Langvad (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) stressed the need for collaboration among employers, unions, disabled people's organizations and Governments to promote employment for persons with disabilities. He stated that international cooperation, as mandated by article 32, could have a positive impact on the lives of persons with disabilities if pursued from a collaborative and rights-based approach.

23. Javed Abidi (National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, India) stated that a major barrier against a fully inclusive labour market was the lack of a firm policy framework against discrimination. Without such a framework, accessibility would not be enforced, education would not be effectively provided and job opportunities would not be made available to persons with disabilities. He pointed out additional barriers imposed on persons with severe disabilities and psychosocial/intellectual disabilities in labour markets and society at large.

24. Ronnie Goldberg (United States Council for International Business) stated that the public sector and civil society could have more effective communication with each other. She pointed out the importance of providing incentives to the business sector by adopting pro-business language and focusing on the positive ramifications of embracing diversity. She referred to the Global Business and Disability Network, a public-private partnership initiative of ILO, as a good example of how inclusive employment objectives could be realized.

25. Ronald McCallum (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) observed that, even in developed nations, persons with disabilities were twice as likely to be unemployed than their peers without disability. He pointed out that, according to the 2010 report on *Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers* released by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, employment rates for persons with disabilities in its member countries were 40 per cent below national averages.

26. Annie Garcia (SM Supermalls, Philippines) provided an overview of SM Supermalls' efforts to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in its business in collaboration with various stakeholders within the Philippines and beyond. She discussed a four-pronged approach to inclusion: creation of a committee on disability issues, planning, training and information campaigns.

Interactive dialogue on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

27. The President of the Conference, Mårten Grunditz (Sweden), opened the meeting by welcoming the panellists. The panellists introduced their programmes with concrete examples showing the ways in which their programmes had supported the implementation of the Convention in various country offices.

28. Thomas Stelzer (Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) gave an overview of the efforts of the Department since the third session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention. He highlighted the critical role played by the Department in fostering collaboration among national Governments, United Nations entities and civil society organizations to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in development. He noted that the Department had co-chaired the United Nations Interdepartmental Task Force on Accessibility of the Secretariat, which had made major strides in promoting accessibility within the United Nations and beyond. He added that, in cooperation with members of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the plan of action had been completed.

29. Jane Stewart (United Nations Development Group) discussed the work of the United Nations country teams and their assistance to various Governments on the implementation of the Convention. She stated that the United Nations Inter-Agency Support Group had established an outcome document that identified the current implementation initiatives. She emphasized that although there were many areas for improvement, the United Nations remained committed to including persons with disabilities and disabled people's organizations in all processes of strategizing, planning, monitoring and evaluating the development agenda.

30. Aleksandra Posarac (World Bank) gave an overview of the World Bank's efforts to support the rights of persons with disabilities. She stated that barriers to

implementation were removable and that persons with disabilities should have a continued and integral role in all development programmes. She introduced the partnership between the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) in preparing the *World Report on Disability* in the spirit of article 32 of the Convention.

31. Alana Officer (WHO) summarized the *World Report on Disability*, which was the foremost global assessment of the situations of persons with disabilities to date. She stated that the *World Report on Disability* offered practical guidance on addressing barriers and that WHO would continue to support capacity-building of persons with disabilities around the world.

32. Aiko Akiyama (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)) stated that ESCAP had worked to promote the ratification and implementation of the Convention in the Asia-Pacific region through advocacy, capacity-building and knowledge management. She stated that ESCAP, in support of the third Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, was currently working to foster regional collaboration on this initiative and was providing support for the sharing of research and information. She noted that ESCAP had launched the "Make the right real" campaign at the regional level in 2010.

33. Diane Almeras (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)) provided an update on the accomplishments and initiatives of ECLAC. She stated that ECLAC had published three studies: a study on the availability, collection and use of data on persons with disabilities in the region, a study on the national legislation and programmes initiated in Latin American countries and a situational analysis of the implementation of the Convention in the Caribbean subregion. She raised the concern that collection of further data on disability and invention of data-collection methods were necessary for the successful implementation of the Convention.

34. Gisela Nauk (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)) provided an update on the efforts of ESCWA. She stressed that major barriers persisted regarding the availability of disability data, existing infrastructure, budgets and lack of awareness on disability issues. She stated that ESCWA had launched an initiative to create an inventory of available statistics on disability within its mandates and continued to promote a rights-based approach and collaborate with its sister agencies.

35. Jennifer Kargbo (Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)) gave an overview of the efforts of ECA. She contended that the African response to persons with disabilities was premised on development challenges related to human capital. She stated that ECA was working to make the rights of persons with disabilities a mainstream issue. She also pointed out that international cooperation between Governments and disabled people's organizations would be strategic for future initiatives. She stated that the African youth report 2011 had highlighted the fact that disability was one of the most pervasive challenges for youth in the region.

36. Patience Stephens (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)) stated that UN-Women had been working to respect and incorporate the rights of persons with disabilities through a strategic plan which had specific provisions for the rights of women and girls with disabilities. She said that UN-Women would continue to work to integrate and

advance the rights of persons with disabilities, in close partnership with relevant stakeholders.

37. Ibrahim Salama (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) provided an update on the works of OHCHR with regard to the Convention. He stated that OHCHR had conducted workshops at the national and regional levels to promote the ratification and implementation of the Convention and would continue to develop knowledge and training tools emanating from thematic studies. He also noted that the United Nations Interdepartmental Task Force on Accessibility was working to make interpretation and documentation, as well as related services, more accessible. He highlighted the importance of monitoring the implementation of the Convention by civil society and the need for the States parties to submit the mandatory national reports in a timely manner.

38. During the interactive discussions, Brazil, Guatemala, Panama, Senegal and Sierra Leone made interventions. A senator from Brazil expressed concern that the current economic crisis would impede the progress of the implementation of the Convention. Sierra Leone discussed issues relating to the submission of national reports. Panama encouraged all States to ratify the Convention and to improve their respective national policies and practices on disability. Senegal asked if UN-Women had a plan to establish a programme on women with disabilities and if there were strategies in place to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls.

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

39. Mr. McCallum, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, made a presentation. He introduced members of the Committee, who joined him at the podium, and expressed appreciation for the participation of all States parties. He stated that although the Committee had conducted a successful dialogue with Tunisia and would conduct a dialogue with Spain, there had been a new challenge concerning the late submission of reports, which reduced the opportunities for dialogue between the treaty body and the States parties.

40. The Chair also encouraged the States parties to support the work of the Committee by considering the submission of their reports in either French or English. He mentioned that the Committee planned to make a request to the General Assembly for additional meeting times and resources to fulfil its task.

41. At the conclusion of the interactive dialogue, the President of the Conference noted that dialogue had again proven its worth and that it was critical for all relevant United Nations agencies, programmes, funds and entities to periodically engage in such dialogue. He noted that there was room for improvement and perfection to achieve effective integration and mainstreaming of a disability perspective in all development work. He stated that it was critical that the United Nations Development Group guidance note for United Nations country teams be disseminated, implemented, monitored and evaluated. The President stressed, in this respect, the importance of engaging disabled people's organizations in all stages of the policy cycle. He also underscored that the Conference had noted the appeals by the Committee on timely reporting by the States parties and on required meeting times, expressing his confidence that these important matters would be duly considered by the General Assembly.